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CIA reports often changed to reflect political line, former analyst says

Grenada invasion planning assailed

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WASHINGTON — A top intelligence analyst who quit after CIA Director William Casey altered one of his secret reports contends that Mr. Casey and Pentagon officials consistently reject analyses for political reasons.

In a magazine article, John Horton said Mr. Casey dismissed his estimate of the number of Cuban soldiers on Grenada — an estimate later verified by the U.S. forces that invaded the island nation — because it did not support the administration's hard-line views on the Cubans.

Mr. Horton also accused a senior Pentagon official of rewriting a military analyst's report on weaknesses in the Salvadoran armed forces and charged the administration with a string of intelligence failures, including ones involving the Grenada invasion and the mining of Nicaraguan harbors, which he said the intelligence community would have advised against had it been asked.

Mr. Horton, a top CIA operations officer from 1948 to 1975 and chief Latin America officer for the National Intelligence Council — which prepares foreign intelligence estimates — in 1983 and 1984, made his accusations in an article in this month's *Foreign Service Journal*.

The article is Mr. Horton's first written comment on the CIA since he

resigned last year after Casey told him to rewrite a report on Mexico. Mr. Casey wanted the report to put greater emphasis on the possibility that Central American conflicts could trigger political upheaval in Mexico.

The article accuses Mr. Casey of disapproving the Grenada estimate because it minimized the number of Cuban forces on the island and did not support administration claims that the Cuban-built airport there would be used for military purposes.

The United States had claimed there were more than 1,000 Cubans on the island, while Havana counted 786, mostly construction workers. Mr. Horton's estimate both agreed with Havana's and disagreed with U.S. claims that the discrepancy was due to many Cubans hiding in the hills.

Intelligence officials, meeting on the Sunday after the invasion, "counted Cubans and Grenadians, added and subtracted, and finally concluded that no one remained in the hills," Mr. Horton wrote.

But the next day, Mr. Horton said, "A person with some responsibility in the [intelligence] community, although not himself an intelligence officer, asked to read the assessment. Later I asked him what he thought of it. I was speechless when he said, 'I think it stinks.' ... I went to see Casey as soon as I could. He was less abrupt, merely finding it 'unimaginative.'"

"I can only suppose that the assessment was 'unimaginative' because of what it did not say. For example, we could have said that the

Cuban construction workers were actually combat troops in disguise, or that the arms found in Grenada were destined to be used to overthrow friendly governments elsewhere in the Caribbean, or that the airfield was not for tourism but for Soviet reconnaissance aircraft."

Mr. Horton also said that a confidential study prepared by a military analyst in 1984 was rewritten by a Pentagon official because it "contained a discussion of the Salvadoran armed forces' weaknesses." While not identifying the official, Horton said he was "heavily involved in supporting the armed forces of El Salvador."

The revision, Mr. Horton charged, was typical of the practice of some administration officials to suppress internal discussion.

Mr. Horton also described Grenada as an intelligence failure. He said that Washington was surprised by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop's assassination and that U.S. troops lacked crucial information on the exact location of Americans on the island even as they began their invasion.

Both the CIA and the Pentagon declined comment on Mr. Horton's allegations. But administration sources familiar with the matter said Mr. Horton's claims that policymakers alter intelligence information to conform to policy are wrong.

"It isn't like that at all," said one. "What Horton is referring to is the normal tension of the give-and-take between analysts and policymakers."